



Western South Dakota Outdoor Report

Wildlife Division Region 1
December 19, 2014



Region 1 Wildlife Report

DATE: 11/20/2014

North District (Lawrence, Butte, Harding, Perkins, Meade & Ziebach)

Reporting Officer: DCOS Apland, WCO's Eastman, Mutschler, Fees & Hein

Fishing Report:

Lawrence County –Fishing activity has slowed down as we transition to the ice fishing season.

Butte County – Anglers fishing Orman have been scarce due to the recent cold weather. The ice continues to form but the main body of water still is open. Please keep a safety mind-set while stepping on the ice in the upcoming weeks. Help us keep the aquatic nuisance out of our lakes!

Perkins County – The majority of fisherman have been struggling to catch many fish at Shadehill. But a few are having limited luck with walleye and crappie. What fish that are being caught look fat and healthy.

Meade County – Activity has been slow throughout Meade County with minimal fishing activity for both Meade and Ziebach Counties. Bear Butte has seen supplementary stocking of several fish species recently.

Ziebach – Anglers reports have been limited in recent weeks.

- season is open and hunters are having some success. There are quality deer still in the Black Hills. This past year's precipitation has created quality habitat allowing for great antler growth. The hunters that are walking areas are seeing decent numbers of deer. The rut is in full swing and the next couple weeks will provide a great opportunity to catch that big buck following the does.
- West River Firearm Deer opened up on the 15th of November. Hunters please ensure that you acquire the necessary permission to access private land. Also, if you see a violation occur in the fields please remember to gather as much information without making contact with the violator. Please call the TIPS hotline with information. There are still good numbers of deer throughout the North West. Good Luck This Weekend Hunters!
- Archery deer season is open and although deer numbers are down throughout most of western SD hunters can still have a quality archery hunting experience. With the recent cold temperatures the activity has increased. In some of the prairie areas the hunters have been reporting that the deer are now in the rut. In the farm countries of NW South Dakota more whitetail deer are becoming visible as the corn is coming out. Remember to respect the land, landowners, and wildlife by following rules and taking good ethical shots.
- The Elk Prairie Units are now closed for the month and will re-open for December. The season has been great thus far. Hunters have been harvesting some very nice elk.
- Pheasant season is open and hunters have been reporting a much better hunt this year than last. With the harvesting of the corn fields in Perkins County more pheasants are being seen. Most hunters are harvesting between 1 and 2 birds on average in Perkins County and 1 bird for Ziebach County.
- Duck season also opened October 11th for the High Plains region. Some ducks and geese have started to show up in the Shadehill area. All other dams have froze up in the area.

the cover but **Furbearing Report:**

- Over the last couple weeks I have received calls regarding some trap theft in the Perkins county area. People need to remember that it is illegal to tamper with or steal someone's animals or traps.



Western Prairie Lake and dams:

Fishing has been slow.

Please read the Western Lakes Regulations when fishing due to the changes of limits and sizes of fish in each lake.

Things to Remember:

- With the hunting season upon us, hunters please be cognizant of the fire dangers. Pay close attention to vehicle travel, cigarette butts, camp fires, and all other potential fire starters. It is always a good idea to take along a fire extinguisher just in case!
- Backcountry roads when wet are a mess. Please avoid tearing up roads and private driveways when possible.
- Hunters please remember baiting wildlife for the purpose of hunting is illegal. Step up to the challenge, don't bait.
- Dove hunters are required to harvest doves in flight and 50yrd from the road.
- Archery hunters should review recent regulation updates before entering the field.

Please remember to get the 2014 Hunting Handbook and read up on new changes for this year. Also, the 2014 Hunting Atlas is out. Please review due to changes in WIA land this year in certain locations.

Fall survey is still in progress. As of now the department is surveying antelope, turkey and deer in the Black hills. The State of South Dakota Pheasant survey has been completed and you can find the results on the GFP website.

PLEASE REMEMBER WITH DRIER WEATHER/GRASS BRINGS HIGHER FIRE DANGER. PEOPLE RESPECTFUL ON PUBLIC AREAS WITH THE FALL HUNTING SEASON APPROACHING.

Region 1 Wildlife Report

District

(SE Lawrence, S Meade, C Pennington, E Pennington, Haakon, N Jackson, NE Custer)

Reporting Officer: WCO's Brainard, Edwards, Geigle, Keeton, Thomsen

DATE: 12/03/2014

Six to 12 inches - Snowmobiles and ATVs can travel safely on good ice that is at least six inches thick.

Twelve to 16 inches – Small cars and pickups can venture onto the ice once it is a foot or more thick. However, anglers are generally encouraged to avoid driving on ice that is less than 16 inches thick.

More than 16 inches – Generally, a medium-sized car or mid-sized pickup can travel safely on good, clear, solid ice.



Wildlife:

Elk:

Antlerless elk season opened and will run December 1-15. Elk hunters need to be aware that only antlerless elk tags are valid during the December hunt. Wounding loss is a concern during the December season as elk are in larger herds. Hunters need to be cognizant of pass through shots as well as being certain if multiple shots are fired, they are at the same elk.

Deer:

Archery, youth, and muzzleloader deer seasons are currently open. The Black Hills and west river rifle deer seasons closed on Sunday, November 30th. Hunters are reminded that Antlerless Muzzleloader (MZD-LM2) and Antlerless Archery (ARD-LM1) tags are not valid in the Black Hills fire protection district and for most areas out west on the prairie except for a few counties. Please refer to the 2014 deer application for open units with the LM tags. It has been a good year for many sportsmen and unique in that licensed hunters have had fewer hunters to share the resource and landscape with, reducing competition.

	Canadas	Duch
NE	1	1
NW	0	0

SE	1	1
SW	0	0

Please remember to pick up your copy of the 2014 Hunting Handbook and read up on new changes for this year. Also, the 2014 Hunting Atlas is out. Please review a new copy of the 2014 WIA atlas as some changes in private land enrollment may have changed from last year.

The State of South Dakota Pheasant survey has been completed and you can find the results on the GFP website.

County	Pennington		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
NE	1	1	0
NW	0	0	0
SE	1	1	0
SW	0	0	0

Please remember to get the 2014 Hunting Handbook and read up on new changes for this year. Also, the 2014 Hunting Atlas is out. Please review due to changes in WIA land this year in certain locations.

Fall survey is still in progress. As of now the department is surveying deer. The State of South Dakota Pheasant survey has been completed and you can find the results on the GFP website.

Region 1 Wildlife Report

District

(SE Lawrence, S Meade, C Pennington, E Pennington, Haakon, N Jackson, NE Custer)

Reporting Officer: WCO's Brainard, Edwards, Geigle, Keeton, Thomsen

DATE: 12/03/2014

Central DCOS McCormick

Fishing Activity: Western South Dakota

Black Hills area lakes and streams:

Pactola Lake still has a portion of open water. Sheridan Lake is completely frozen over and ice anglers are fishing near SD Hwy 385 (ice depth approximately 6 inches near the fishing pier). However, ATV use is not recommended at this time. Small ponds have ice cover and ice anglers have been fishing small ponds in the central district. Several small dams such as New Underwood, Curlew, Wall and Lake Waggoner offer ice fishing opportunities.



Exercise caution. Practice Safety! Ice anglers should be cognizant of ice depths before venturing onto a frozen body of water. Water movement, vegetation and snow cover will cause ice thicknesses to be extremely variable, especially during above normal temperatures. Like all outdoor activities, ice anglers must assume personal responsibility for their own safety.

Ice-Thickness Guidelines for Anglers

Less than four inches of ice - Stay off!

Four to six inches - Ice fishing via foot travel in single-file lines should be safe, assuming the ice is clear and clean of snow.

Six to 12 inches - Snowmobiles and ATVs can travel safely on good ice that is at least six inches thick.

Twelve to 16 inches – Small cars and pickups can venture onto the ice once it is a foot or more thick. However, anglers are generally encouraged to avoid driving on ice that is less than 16 inches thick.

More than 16 inches – Generally, a medium-sized car or mid-sized pickup can travel safely on good, clear, solid ice.



Wildlife:

Elk:

Antlerless elk season opened and will run December 1-15. Elk hunters need to be aware that only antlerless elk tags are valid during the December hunt. Wounding loss is a concern during the December season as elk are in larger herds. Hunters need to be cognizant of pass through shots as well as being certain if multiple shots are fired, they are at the same elk.

Deer:

Archery, youth, and muzzleloader deer seasons are currently open. The Black Hills and west river rifle deer seasons closed on Sunday, November 30th. Hunters are reminded that Antlerless Muzzleloader (MZD-LM2) and Antlerless Archery (ARD-LM1) tags are not valid in the Black Hills fire protection district and for most areas out west on the prairie except for a few counties. Please refer to the 2014 deer application for open units with the LM tags. It has been a good year for many sportsmen and unique in that licensed hunters have had fewer hunters to share the resource and landscape with, reducing competition.

Region 1 Wildlife Report

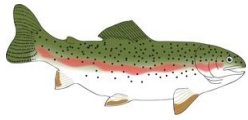


Date: 11/11/2014

County: **West Custer/West Pennington**

Reporting Officer: WCO Jacob Ehlert

Fishing: Deerfield- Fishing is slow.



Small Game: Rabbit hunters are doing well in the snow.

Big Game:

Black Hills Deer- Deer hunters are having great success. The mule deer rut is on. The whitetail rut is starting heavy. Hunters out in the snow found deer bedded on south faces in heavy timber. Midweek the hunting pressure is light, it's a great time to be out.

If you have a black hills deer tag the time to hunt is now.

District Report: This 4x4 mule deer buck was shot and left to rot near Spring Creek Road in Pennington County on 11/1/2014.



If you have any information please call TIPS at 1-888-OVERBAG or your local Sheriff's Office. Making the call can prevent poachers from stealing YOUR public resource!



Date: 11/10/2014

County: **East Custer/South Pennington**
Reporting Officer: WCO Ron Tietsort

Fishing Activity: We will be building ice on the area lakes and ponds with highs in the single digits and some below 0 lows this week; it might be time to start thinking about changing line on the ice rods and tip-ups

Lakota, Bismarck and Horse thief lakes have all been drained for the fall and winter, some fish have been removed and transferred to other waters. Work on cleaning out the sediment should begin as soon as we get a hard freeze.

ESTIMATED WATERFOWL STATUS/OPPORTUNITY FOR CUSTER COUNTY:

County	CUSTER		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
NE	1	1	0
NW	0	0	0
SE	1	1	0
SW	0	0	0

County	Pennington		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
NE			
NW	0	0	0
SE			
SW	0	0	0

District Report:

There is a lot of traffic in the Black Hills with the deer season upon us. It seems like the number or road hit deer goes up this time of year as well. Be sure to slow down and scan as you are driving.

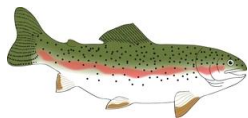
And as always, if you witness a wildlife violation, try to get as much information as you can and call your local Wildlife Conservation Officer or the tips hotline.

1-888-683-7224.

Date: 11/11/2014

County: **West Custer/West Pennington**
Reporting Officer: WCO Jacob Ehlert

Fishing: Deerfield- Fishing is slow.



Small Game: Rabbit hunters are doing well in the snow.

Date: 12/16/2014

County: **Bennett/East Shannon/South Jackson**

Reporting Officer: WCO Tom Beck

Fishing Activity:

This last snowstorm will change everything as far as fishing and access. Snow depth varies by area, but the worst areas received around 8 inches of snow, which has blown into big drifts. It may insulate the ice in spots causing poor ice conditions. Prior to the storm, 2/3 of the Little White River Project Lake was open. The snow and cold will form ice, but ice will vary considerably so use extreme caution if attempting to fish on the lake.



Hunting Report:

Waterfowl – The snow is changing everything for waterfowl also. Some geese are sticking around and we will not know if some have moved



Date: 11/10/2014

County: East Custer/South Pennington

Reporting Officer: WCO Ron Tietsort

Fishing Activity: We will be building ice on the area lakes and ponds with highs in the single digits and some below 0 lows this week; it might be time to start thinking about changing line on the ice rods and tip-ups

Lakota, Bismarck and Horse thief lakes have all been drained for the fall and winter, some fish have been removed and transferred to other waters. Work on cleaning out the sediment should begin as soon as we get a hard freeze.

North District

Hunting Report:

- Muzzleloader season is now in full swing and the hunters are having some success.
- Archery deer season is open and although deer numbers are down throughout most of western SD hunters can still have a quality archery hunting experience. With the recent cold temperatures the activity has increased. Remember to respect the land, landowners, and wildlife by following rules and taking good ethical shots.
- The Elk Prairie Units Have opened back up for both Cow and any elk hunters. Hunters have been having some success although temperatures are above average.
- Pheasant season is open and hunters have been reporting a much better hunt this year than last. With the harvesting of the corn fields in Perkins County more pheasants are

being seen. Most hunters are harvesting between 1 and 2 birds on average in Perkins County and 1 bird for Ziebach County.

- Grouse numbers have been good and hunter response has been positive. Hunters have to put their walking shoes on to get birds out from all the cover but positive reports have come out of the field. Ziebach Co. has a few good pockets of pheasants that provide a good hunting opportunity.

ESTIMATED WATERFOWL STATUS/OPPORTUNITY FOR CUSTER COUNTY:

County	CUSTER		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
NE	1	1	0
NW	0	0	0
SE	1	1	0
SW	0	0	0

County	Pennington		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
NE			
NW	0	0	0
SE			
SW	0	0	0

Report:

**And as always, if you witness a wildlife violation, try to get as much information as you can and call your local Wildlife Conservation Officer or the tips hotline.
1-888-683-7224.**

Date: 12/17/2014

County: Fall River

Reporting Officer: WCO DJ Schroeder

Fishing Activity:



Fishermen should be very careful with the ice at Angostura and Coldbrook Reservoir - - some of the bays are frozen - - but the ice is not very good. You should wait for better weather.

Hunting Report:

District Report:

Date

Fishing Activity:



Just before the storm rolled in anglers were reporting catching nice crappie, walleye and bass at Angostura. The hot spots for the crappies seemed to be around the tires and over by the dam.

Hunting Report:



Small Game: I have been seeing a few more pheasants around this last week. Not sure if the weather or the crops coming out played the bigger role. Didn't see much for hunters this past weekend. We did have some duck and goose hunters. They had some success in areas. I believe the opportunities will increase with the cold weather putting the freeze on all the prairie ponds.

ESTIMATED WATERFOWL STATUS/OPPORTUNITY FOR FALL RIVER COUNTY AND WESTERN SHANNON COUNTY:

County	FALL RIVER		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows

County	WESTERN SHANNON		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows

appear to being going into the rut early this year. Bucks were really chasing the does this past week. Youth and mentored hunters seem to be more frequent this year. They should have some good opportunities out there this year.

Land Report:

Hunters are reminded to watch for the "off-road" travel restrictions while hunting on the State Game Production Areas, Walk-In Areas, and US Forest Service Black Hills and Grasslands properties. Hunters should also remember to be extremely careful with fire dangers this fall.

ponds.

COUNTY:



County	FALL RIVER
--------	------------

County	WESTERN SHANNON
--------	-----------------

	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
--	---------	-------	-------

	Canadas	Ducks	Snows
--	---------	-------	-------

ESTIMATED WATERFOWL STATUS/OPPORTUNITY FOR FALL RIVER COUNTY AND WESTERN SHANNON COUNTY:

County	FALL RIVER		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows

County	WESTERN SHANNON		
	Canadas	Ducks	Snows

A few trout are being caught on the Cedar Creek Trout Ponds. Please remember to stay on the trails and follow refuge rules when crossing their lands.

Hunting Report:



Waterfowl – There are a few Canadian Geese around the area. They are spread across the area with some on the refuge and others on private lakes, particularly in the Sandhill region. The flight from the refuge every morning lasts only a few minutes at this time. Likewise, there are some ducks in the area and they are also spread across the private ponds and lakes. We haven't had any weather to move them lately so jump shooting has been the only way hunters were successful.

Small Game – Weather continues to be the news when it comes to pheasant hunting. Until recently, the weather has been warm and the pheasants hard to find. It has cooled off, but public lands pheasants are still hard to find. Many have moved onto private lands to avoid the hunting pressure. Others spend their days in the unharvested crop fields and not coming out until the end of shooting time. While the crops are slowly being harvested, the days of easy dumb birds are gone until next season. Expect experienced, hard to get within gun range birds if hunting public lands. I have seen a few more grouse lately as the sunflowers harvest proceeds. As the weather cools, more birds will start moving into the cropped areas from the Sandhills also.

Big Game – I've had quite a few inquiries lately asking where all of the deer are. Basically, we had such warm nice weather that most of the deer are spread out and have not yarded in their traditional wintering areas. Some deer may still be in standing crops. But we need to remember that it is a different deer herd now compared to past years. The EHD die offs of the last couple of years have reduced the number of whitetails and mule deer considerably. Deer herd dynamics have changed considerably with most of the herd made up of young animals. This is especially true of the bucks. Don't expect to see large mature bucks this year. The majority in the population are younger bucks. There are little bunches of deer here and there, but not the big herds of the past. Public lands deer are few and far between as upland game pressure have either forced the deer to become nocturnal or moved them onto private lands. I strongly suggest that if you have a deer license for this area that you scout the area prior to the season opener and try to obtain permission on private lands. Public land hunting will be very competitive for a few

nter conflicts, but fortunately the hunters won. A couple of local hunters have told me they quit taking their dogs out until it cools off and the snakes are down their holes as heat and snake bites were too real a concern to take them hunting. A lot of other hunters have evidently just quit going out until the weather changes as hunting pressure dropped considerably. Likewise, the number of nonresident hunters have dropped considerably. The ones that have stuck it out are reporting pretty good success, but they are working all day for their birds. The good news is that the corn and sunflower harvest is in full swing so the birds may not have standing crops to hide in down the road. Once the harvest is over, it may be pretty good hunting later in the season.

Big Game – The refuge deer hunters reported a very disappointing hunt/harvest. There were not a lot of deer in the refuge this last season. While deer numbers are considerably lower than in past years, the standing crops outside of the refuge attracted the remaining deer making for a very slow hunt. Hopefully as the crops are harvested, more deer will filter back toward the refuge. I say hopefully as I'm getting questions from locals asking if I am seeing any deer. While I have been seeing some and have made the same assumption that others have that the deer are in the corn and sunflower fields, I'm not seeing additional deer in those areas that have been harvested. There is so much cover and the weather hasn't been good for deer movements that I suspect as fall turns toward winter more will show. Once the rut starts and deer start moving, we should know more. While there were several elk harvested a week ago, this last week was move some additional animals in the next week or so. Traditionally, elk harvest will slow once the crops are out of the field so I'd suggest coming now if you have a tag.

District Report-

Big Game – I have found one more whitetail deer (a buck) which likely died of EHD. If you find any safety course planned for the nights of September 24 – 26 in Martin. Please contact Gary Rayhill or Tom Beck for more information.

Big Game – Several elk were killed last week. It is still tough hunting as most crops are still standing in the fields, but at least a few elk were in the area. The refuge deer hunt has been tough also. With all of the standing crops outside of the refuge and the die off of the last couple of years, deer numbers inside the refuge are low and hunters are having some issues finding deer to shoot. I don't look for any change until crops are harvested this fall.

District Report: If you are going camping in the Black Hills Fire Protection District remember no open fires outside of designated campgrounds.

If you witness a violation please call TIPS at 1-888-OVERBAG or your local Sheriff's Office. Making the call can prevent poachers from stealing YOUR public resource!



District Report: If you are going camping in the Black Hills Fire Protection District remember no open fires outside of designated campgrounds. This has been an issue lately.

If you witness a violation please call TIPS at 1-888-OVERBAG or your local Sheriff's Office. Making the call can prevent poachers from stealing YOUR public resource!



with anglers.
the water.

Fishing Activity:



Not much to report on this week. I was busy with the hunting seasons and didn't get much of a chance to visit. The high winds discouraged many from going out on
Date: 11/3/2014

County:

East Custer/South Pennington

Reporting Officer: WCO Ron Tietsort

Fishing Activity: There is some excellent trout fishing going on right now, Center, Legion and Sylvan lakes are producing some nice rainbows. Stockade Lake is good for pan fish and an occasional northern pike.

Lakota, Bismarck and Horse thief lakes have all been drained for the fall and winter, some fish have been removed and transferred to other waters. Work on cleaning the sediment out should begin soon.

Big Game: Black Hills deer season opened on Saturday November 1st, even if you are not a hunter it's a good idea to wear some florescent orange when out hiking, horseback riding etc.

The weather was very warm for the opening weekend but some hunters still had some success, as always, this season just gets better as the deer move into the rut.

Small Game: Not much to report, some sharp-tail grouse hunting is available in the eastern portion of the district.

Please take the time to record a license number and vehicle description when you witness a fish or game violation. Don't hesitate to call the TIP's Hotline or the local Sheriff's Office and report the violators. You will help us all preserve the sport!!

Date: 10/23/2014